

Judges, Sermon #40

Judges 12—we get to see the last part of Jephthah's life.

We left off last time with a brokenhearted father!
Jephthah goes from that crisis into another crisis.

Judges 12:1

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word.

Judges 12:1-7

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

I. The Men of Ephraim Are Back—this is not a positive.

Ephraim and Manasseh—#1 brothers

They were Joseph's sons.

Ephraim was extremely jealous of Manasseh.

Proverbs 14:30, “. . . *envy [is] the rottenness of the bones*”—jealousy destroys from within.

The confrontation was serious.

Ephraim mobilized their forces and actually marched against Jephthah (vs. 1a).

They intimidated/challenged this new commander, accusing him, complaining to him, and threatening him that they were going to burn his house down.

They demonstrated no respect for Jephthah.

Jephthah has risked his life in battle to defeat the Ammonites and all the Ephraimites can do is blow up.

Instead of congratulating, they criticize.

Instead of thanking, they threaten.

They are angry, jealous, and proud.

Proverbs 28:25, “*He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife . . .*”

Proverbs 13:10, “*Only by pride cometh contention . . .*”

So, what was Jephthah going to do?

The reception of accusations (vs. 1b)—how do we respond?

The leaders of the tribe of Ephraim expressed to Jephthah the same pride, jealousy, and anger they had shown to Gideon (8:1)—got in his face.

#2—Abyezer (Gideon) and Gilead (Jephthah) were descendants of Manasseh.

They are armed for war against their brothers—they hated the success of their relatives. This was a consistent pattern in the tribe of Ephraim.

This time, the Ephraimites had barked up the wrong tree. They had no taste for battle, yet, were always brave after the battle.

As before, they wanted to share the glory of the victory, but they hadn't been too eager to risk their lives in the battle.

Gideon had pacified the Ephraimites, but Jephthah took a more direct approach (vs. 2-3).

The explanation given by Jephthah shows that he remained calm and cool under the verbal attacks, despite the fact of having just been threatened.

His first concern was to defeat the Ammonites.

Second, nobody from Ephraim had offered to come to their rescue.

Third, Jephthah had issued a call for the tribes to assist him in his attack on the enemy, but Ephraim hadn't responded.

And, finally, the Lord gave the victory (vs. 3).

Why are ye here today?

Jephthah tried once again to avoid a war.

The arrogant Ephraimites escalate the situation by name-calling—maybe they thought Jephthah would back down.

The Ephraimites were not applying the principles of "How to Win Friends and Influence People."

The men of Ephraim called them fugitives from Ephraim and Manasseh—insults and slurs.

So, the fight was on and Jephthah smote the Ephraimites.

An ironic situation has developed.

They had called Jephthah and the Gileadites fugitives and now they are the fugitives.

They had to eat their words and they were on the run.

Vs. 5a-6

At the river, they were questioned about their identity.

They were asked, “Are you an Ephraimite?”

Those who said “no” were given a test—they were asked to pronounce a certain word.

Shibboleth was a word that was difficult for the Ephraimites to say because they could not put the “h” in it.

They were tongue-tied because of their dialect.

They said “sibboleth,” and this gave them away (Matt. 26:73).

Their speech/accent betrayed them—gave them away!

It was a simple test, but it worked.

Because of this story, the word *shibboleth* is part of our English vocabulary and is found in our dictionaries.

It stands for any kind of test that a group gives to outsiders to see whether they really belong.

The results were devastating—forty-two thousand Ephraimite soldiers were killed.

This brings to a conclusion Jephthah the judge.

Jephthah was regarded as a great man of the faith (Hebrews 11:32).

Let us stand for closing invitation.

Is jealousy causing problems in your life?

Are we instigating problems due to our pride?

How do we respond to our critics?—usually begins with our siblings